Unit .20

Session .02

Jesus is Tempted

Scripture

Luke 4:1-13

1 Then Jesus left the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit,
and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness **2** for forty
days to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during
those days, and when they were over, he was hungry.
3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell
this stone to become bread." **4** But Jesus answered him,
"It is written: **Man must not live on bread alone.**"
5 So he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms
of the world in a moment of time. **6** The devil said
to him, "I will give you their splendor and all this
authority, because it has been given over to me, and
I can give it to anyone I want. **7** If you, then, will
worship me, all will be yours." **8** And Jesus answered
him, "It is written: **Worship the Lord your God, and
serve him only.**" **9** So he took him to Jerusalem, had
him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to
him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down
from here. **10** For it is written: **He will give his angels
orders concerning you, to protect you**, **11** and **they
will support you with their hands, so that you will
not strike your foot against a stone.**" **12** And Jesus
answered him, "It is said: **Do not test the Lord your
God.**" **13** After the devil had finished every temptation,
he departed from him for a time.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus overcame temptation through the power of God's Word.

Option 1

Tell students they can choose between putting on a skit or doing a drawing. If they're doing drawings, they should work solo; if they're doing skits, they should form their groups.

Have your drawers and groups count off by threes. Whatever number they are determines the subject of their drawing/skit. Each group is going to make two drawings/skits; moreover, each skit will involve temptation. In the first scene, someone is going to succumb to a specific temptation; in the second, the person is going to resist the temptation.

- All the 1s will compose a drawing/skit where someone is tempted to use his or her power solely for himself (e.g., a musician who only uses her talent for her own benefit).
- All the 2s will compose a drawing/skit where someone is tempted to live by their own plans rather than God's (e.g., someone refuses to be generous).
- All the 3s will compose a drawing/skit where someone is tempted to presume upon God or to test God (e.g., someone foolishly spends his money because he says God will supply his every need).

Let them prepare and then show their skits and drawings. Ask if they think Jesus ever faced any of these temptations. If so, when? Segue into how He faced each of these three in His wilderness wandering.

Option 2

The kids' program at your church has requested the aid of your middle schoolers. They will be studying temptation soon, and they want your group to come up with short little nursery rhyme definitions of temptation to teach the little kids. Ask each of your students to compose a little two-to-four-line catchy rhyme in order to help the kids know what temptation is.

After giving students time to come up with their little lines, ask them to share what they came up with. What themes do you see across the rhymes?

Do these definitions of temptation cover Jesus' famous three temptations after His baptism? Today's lesson will look at those temptations.

*Note: if you wish, afterward, you can give students the opportunity to rework their rhymes and/or to add a second verse describing how we overcome temptation.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 4:1-4.

The story of Jesus' baptism, which we studied in a previous session, and Jesus' temptation must be understood together. At Jesus' baptism, the Father affirmed Jesus' identity as His beloved Son, and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. The same Spirit who descended upon Jesus at His baptism led Him into the wilderness to be tempted. Not surprisingly, the first temptation had to do with Jesus' identity as the Son of God—a question of the affirmation He just heard at His baptism.

One important point of application already we see here is that God is not absent in the midst of our temptations. He is not absent in the midst of our pain and trials. He was as present with Jesus in the wilderness as He was at His baptism. And He is as present with us in our wilderness as He is on our mountaintops. Our emotions may tell us otherwise. We may not feel His presence in the same way, but that doesn't change the reality of His promise or His character. He promised He would never leave us (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5). He doesn't break his promises. God is working and active in the midst of whatever trials or temptations you are facing. You are not alone.

- **Why should we always consider that God might be leading us into a trial?**
- **How might trials be a way of strengthening our faith, knowledge, and trust in God?**

Does Jesus' first temptation remind you of the temptation in the garden? Both Adam and Christ were tempted with food; they were tempted to give into the desires of their flesh instead of maintaining their spiritual priorities. And we probably all know what happened in the garden—Adam and Eve failed. They gave in and ate what looked pleasing to them rather than standing firm in obedience and trusting that what God told them was good. But here in the wilderness, we see a totally different response from Jesus.

Even though Jesus was vulnerable and hungry, He succeeded where Adam failed. Jesus chose spiritual priorities over the desires of his flesh. He fought back against temptation using the Word of God. Do not miss the parallels throughout these temptations between Christ and Adam. Where Adam failed and the curse of sin entered into the world, Jesus succeeded and ushered in a new era where sin is being conquered and death will one day be no more. Not only that, we see through Jesus that we too have the power to withstand temptation no matter how vulnerable we are.

- **In what ways can we protect ourselves from giving into temptation when we are in a vulnerable place?**

Read Luke 4:5-8.

In this second temptation we see that Jesus is tempted to believe that God is withholding from Him. Again, isn't that exactly a tactic Satan used with Adam and Eve in the garden? He told Adam and Eve, "If you eat of the tree, you will become like God" (Gen. 3:5), tempting them to believe that there were good things God was hiding from them. Similarly, here in the wilderness Satan tells Jesus, "If you worship me, all authority will be yours" (Luke 4:6-7). Shouldn't Jesus have all authority? Of course! But here, Jesus would have to shift His allegiance to get it.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus overcame temptation through the power of God's Word.

Luke 4

1. Remember, in context this is coming on the heels of Jesus' baptism and initiation into public ministry. So He goes from a total ministry high—the audible voice of God has just affirmed Him in front of the crowds, the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, John the Baptist confirmed He was the promised Messiah—and He leaves the Jordan, leaves this "mountaintop," and heads straight into the wilderness.

2-4. Satan's intent was revealed in the opening words of his first assault: He questioned Jesus' identity as the Son of God. In order to understand the strategy Satan used against Jesus, we must understand how his opening move was intended to lead Jesus to doubt His identity and to indulge an earthly appetite.

Jesus fasted for forty days, so Satan attacked Him at His weakest moment. Behind the temptation to turn the stones into bread was the assumption that physical food is the most important nourishment we need, but Jesus' response said otherwise. In each of the three temptations, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. His reference here, to Deuteronomy 8:3, noted the Word of God as the most needed nourishment.

Bread is one of the sustaining foods for physical life. However, more important than bread is the life of the Spirit. Our spiritual lives are sustained by the Word of God. Jesus understood that although His body was starving, He had feasted on God's Word, spoken over Him at the Jordan River. Jesus knew He was the Son of God—not a starving beggar in the wilderness, but a Son who delighted in the Word of His Father.

Satan transported Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. Herod's temple was a marvel. The 35-acre complex was surrounded by a colonnade. In the center of the splendor was the temple itself, fashioned from glistening white marble and also crowned with gold leaf. It is said that when the sun shone directly on the temple, one had to look away because of its brilliance.

Satan took Jesus to the top of this magnificent building, and he altered his attack by adopting Jesus' method of warfare. Here, Satan also quoted the Bible—Psalm 91:11-12—which refers to God's tender provision of protection to the ones He loves. Satan intended for Jesus to understand these two verses in isolation, apart from the larger context of the Psalm. But Psalm 91 speaks of a person who rests in faith and trusts in the Almighty. The psalmist wrote about why he was not afraid and why he had made the Lord his refuge. In short, the song is from someone who placed his total trust in God.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 64, DDG)

Sinlessness of Jesus

While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely sinless throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

TEACHING PLAN

Time and time again, Satan tempts us to distrust God and begin to question Him in two primary ways: 1) Did God really say that? and 2) Can we really trust him? We have to be careful because this doesn't always look like blatant sin. We need to be on guard and recognize the ways we are tempted to distrust what God said, that His plans are good, or that He withholds good things from those who walk with Him.

- **In what areas do you tend to struggle to trust God the most?**

We can learn a lot from Jesus' response to Satan's temptation here. He did not try to reason with Satan or argue with him. He didn't try to explain why He trusted God's plan. He didn't get into an argument with him about it. He simply stated God's command and left it at that. He stood on the Word of God, allowing God's words to speak for Him when He was tempted in this vulnerable place. Jesus' experience helps us understand our own struggle against temptation in our personal wilderness. God's Word provides the basis of our confidence. Our faith and trust in His Word provides the strength to resist Satan's continual lies. If Jesus had to rely on the Word of God, how much more should we?

- **Satan tried to manipulate the meaning of God's Word in his attack on Jesus. What does this teach us about our need to properly understand God's Word?**

Read Luke 4:9-13.

Jesus was taken to a high mountain. Mysteriously, here Jesus had a glimpse of all the kingdoms of the world at once. Satan's goal was for Jesus to worship him in order to receive power. However, Jesus knew who He was. He knew that His kingdom would be centered on a cross. He knew that His kingdom would be based on His self-sacrifice, not His self-exaltation. He knew that His glory would flow from His identity as the Son of God. And so, once again, He quoted Deuteronomy, saying that only God was deserving of His worship and service.

In Jesus, we see what an absolute and reliant trust in God looks like. Rather than take it on Himself to demand a specific type of provision or blessing from God, Jesus chose to trust the plan and provision God gives. He chose to trust that regardless of how God's provision is displayed, it doesn't change His identity and it doesn't change the character of God. God can be trusted even when we don't understand the ways he chooses to provide. And Jesus rested in that promise, once again using the Word of God as a shield to protect him from the enemy's temptations.

- **What are some things that help you trust God's character even when you can't see or understand His provision?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus overcame temptation through the power of God's Word.

Luke 4

12. "Jesus recognized right away that in spite of the fact that Satan was quoting Scripture at him, he was using a defective hermeneutic, that is, he was twisting and distorting the meaning and interpreting Scripture against Scripture itself. And Jesus said, 'It says: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." ' In other words, 'I'm not allowed to put God to the test; instead God is testing me.' 'When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time' (4:13). Here we see the most significant difference between Jesus and Adam: Jesus believed God. Let me say it again. It is not simply that Jesus believed in God, but he believed God. He believed the word of God, and in the midst of this crisis, he trusted the truth of God's word. What happens when we are put to the test? More often than not we follow the example of Adam rather than the example of Christ. One of the greatest crises in the church today is the crisis of unbelief in the word of God. It is one thing to believe in God, it is another thing to believe God. Christ triumphed over Satan because he believed God. He trusted God, he put his life in the hands of God, and he was victorious."[1]

Activity

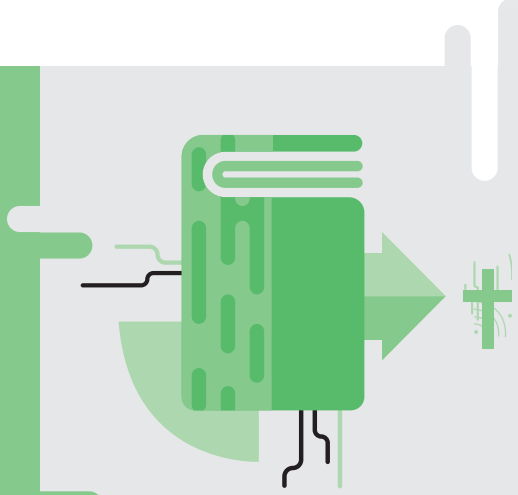
On the board, write, "Physical Needs. Plans. Protection." Point out to your students that these are three legitimate needs. Ask your students to help you make a list of other legitimate human needs or desires (e.g., approval, significance, intimacy, belonging, etc.).

Give each of your students a sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Ask each student to choose one of the legitimate needs on the board (or you can randomly assign them out). Ask each student to fold his or her paper in half. On the left-hand side, they should either write or draw how someone might be tempted to pursue their assigned need in a non-God-magnifying way, like Jesus was tempted. On the right-hand side, the students should write or draw how we can look to Jesus by faith to fulfill that need: bonus points if the student can use a particular promise from the Scriptures.

Give students time to write or draw their ideas; then share them with the group. Point out any particularly powerful temptations or strategies. Remind students that we are already victors over temptation in Jesus; we only need to live out that victory this week. Pray for the Spirit to help you do so.

(p. 65, DDG) Christ Connection

Jesus stepped into our world and overcame the temptation to which Adam succumbed. Jesus showed He is fully obedient to the Father and He is the worthy One who would undo the consequences of Adam's sin and bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:3). Jesus' life of obedience led Him to the cross, the place where He conquered sin and death as our Savior.



JESUS IS TEMPTED

Luke 4:1–13

JESUS IS TEMPTED

Jesus overcame temptation through the power of God's Word.

JESUS CONNECTION

Jesus was sent into the world to do what Adam could not. Because Jesus overcame temptation and was fully obedient to the Father, He is worthy to undo the consequences of Adam's sin and bring blessing to all people (Gen. 12:3). Jesus' life of obedience led Him to the cross, where He conquered sin, death and Satan.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SELF-CONTROL – Not acting carelessly on my own impulses, emotions and desires.

HEAD

What does Satan tempt Jesus to prove?

What does Jesus' response to Satan teach us about the importance of God's Word?

HEART

Ephesians 6:17 describes God's Word as a sword that we have been given to fight temptation, just as Jesus did. How can memorizing God's Word and speaking it out loud when we are tempted to sin help us obey what God says?

Satan tempted Jesus to take what He wanted instead of waiting for God's timing. Sin often tempts us to take shortcuts to get what we want without walking the path God has called us to. But Galatians 5:23 says that the Spirit of God gives us self-control. How would self-control help us to stay in step with God's plan?

HANDS

Choose one option below:

1. Temptations come in many forms:
    - Physically (to overeat or avoid exercise, to focus on our—or other people's—physical appearance)
    - Emotionally (to worry, to doubt our value, to respond in anger)
    - Mentally (to believe or spread rumors, to refuse to be teachable, to cheat or lie)
    - Spiritually (to doubt God, to continue in a sin, to fear being known for following Jesus)

    1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it." Write this verse on a piece of paper or keep it in a note on your phone, and when you feel tempted, read the verse out loud and ask God to help you bear it, as He promised He would.

2. When we are controlled by our impulses, emotions and desires, we lack self-control. Developing self-control is a clear mark of maturity, and something each of us should strive for. In each area below, write down what a lack of self-control could look like and 1–2 ways you can practice self-control. (*Hint: we can always pray that God will help us in every area!*)
    - Posting on social media
    - Dealing with a difficult friend or classmate
    - Having a bad day